URUGUAY, SPOILED CHILD OF THE SOUTHERN FAMILY

Clemenceau Says the Argentines So Regard Her---A Land Where the Principles of the Revolution Have Been Carried Further Than in France.

This is the eleventh of a series of articles giving his impressions of South America written by the former Premier of France.

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By Georges Clemenceau.

MONTEVIDEO at first sight had given me so favorable an impression that I was anxious not to lose the opportunity of seeing more of it. But I had begun with the Argentine, and in such a country the more you see the more you want to see. I tore myself away from it with great regret, conscious that I was leaving much undone.

Time had passed all too quickly. I had now only three weeks left for Brazil, where long months ought rather to be spent.

Small as it is, Uruguay is for many reasons one of the most interesting of the South American republics. How far could a few days be made to go there? In its general features the country is not very different from the Argentine pampas. There is the same alluvial soil with the same estancias, the same system of agriculture and cattle raising.

For me the principal interest lay in the Uruguay character. Three visits of a day each furnished me with an occasion to converse with some of the most distinguished statesmen, but is this sufficient ground on which to form an opinion of a race whose superabundant activity is directed toward every department of knowledge and of labor, now the first essential in any civilization? I do not pretend that it is. Still, I consider that even a brief investigation, if perfectly disinterested and unprejudiced, can and should furnish elements of sound information that is not to be despised.

But perhaps I shall be excused if instead of making affirmations that are open to challenge I give myself the pleasure of dwelling on the splendid qualities of these courageous and modest men who are engaged in building up a social structure that is worthy of all our admiration.

Uruguay, once the "Oriental Band" of the Argentine, lies between that republic and Brazil, forming thus a buffer State which, in the event of war (may the gods forbid such a thing!) between Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, would make it somewhat difficult for the two hostile armies to get at each other. For this reason alone, I am disposed to think the setting up of an independent State between the River Uruguay and the sea a very wise provision.

I am aware that it is a currently accepted principle that the very A. B. C. of South American foreign policy is peace between the Argentine, Brazil, and Chile. A very sound doctrine, the triple hegemony offering a fairly solid guarantee against usurpation by one.

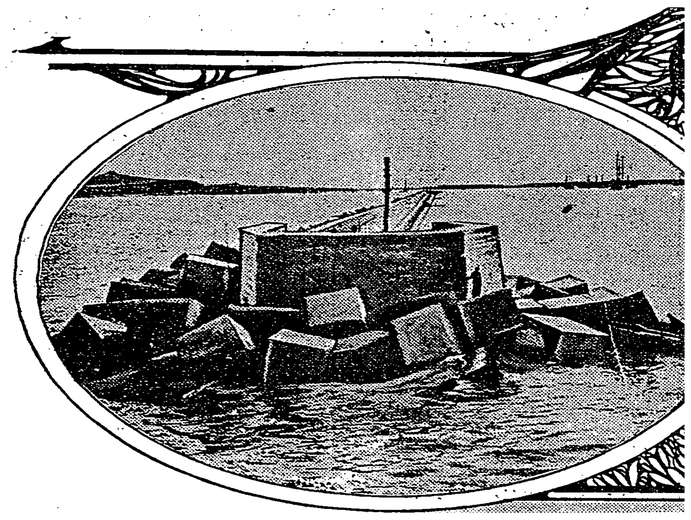
Notwithstanding its diminutive size as compared with its gigantic neighbors, Uruguay appears well fitted morally to fulfill the conditions of an independent State. There is a marked development of National spirit among its population, whose most striking feature is a mental activity that is sometimes carried almost to excess. Brazil has laid out immense sums of money in the purchase of dreadnoughts that have latterly not always been above reproach, and the Argentine felt consequently in duty bound to burden herself also with some of these sea monsters. Against whom are the Argentine and Brazil thus arming? They would both find it hard to say, since they have plenty to do at home without directing their creative energy in European fashion to the business of destruction, unless absolutely forced thereto.

Let me tell them that it is but vain bravado that has urged them on the dangerous downward path of armament. Where will they stop? When you have a population as large in proportion as that of the United States, it will be time enough, alas! to claim your share in the great international concert of extermination. Begin by giving life, O happy folk who have been robbed by none, and who have nothing to get back.

I have already spoken of the appearance of Montevideo. A broad bay commanding the entrance of the Rio de la Plata, magnificently situated for a commercial port, the Government has not overlooked its advantages. In 1901 tenders were invited, and a French syndicate was granted the contract for the construction of the docks. There are important quarries in all parts of Uruguay, which is more favored than the Argentine in this respect, and the builders found all the stone they needed close at hand.

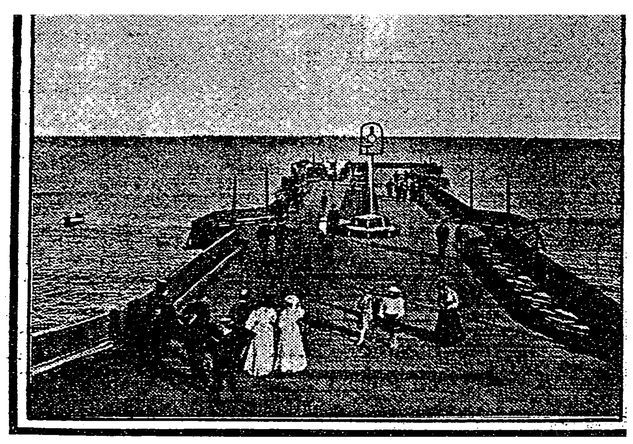
The colossal work is now nearly ended. In 1909 two of our armored cruisers, the Gloire and the Marseillaise, visited the port of Montevideo. The comfortable boats of the Mihanowitch Company which run daily between Buenos Aires and Montevideo moor alongside the quays. Why the large European vessels should be forced to remain outside in the roads is a puzzle? The only explanation seems to be some question of red-tape between the different governing bodies to which I trust the Uruguay Government will speedily put an end.

As things are, the building of the docks is but a sorry farce, and the more regrettable in that one of the features of the handsome harbor is a simplification of harbor dues which inflicts the least possible delay on the vessels calling there. The docks were built by the State alone without the help of a loan. In 1906 the tonnage of vessels entered and cleared in the port was 14,000,000. M. Sillard, who has been in charge of the works from the beginning, took us to see the finest sites on the bay, and in his motor car we climbed half way up the famous Cerro, so that we might have the pleasure of walking a short distance over the rough places of a road now under construction.



Sea Wall at Montevideo, Part of a $13,000,000 Plan to Improve the Harbor.

Stock Exchange, Montevideo, Which Cost $150,000.



Pier at Pocitos, Uruguay's Favorite Seaside Resort Near Montevideo.

spoiled for us by the disagreeable saladeros.

If I may say so without hurting the feelings of my friends, the Cerro Fort is not, I believe, impregnable. Its demolition has, it is said, been agreed upon. If a hotel or casino were built on its site, the Montevideans would have a pleasant object for a small excursion, for from the top of the hill there is a grand view over the town and estuary to the ocean.

The Lieutenant of the city—a pure American European, with five years spent in the diplomatic service at Rome behind him—kindly offered to do the honors of the town for us. Under the guidance of Señor Daniel Muñoz, now the Uruguayan Minister at Buenos Aires, who is as well known at Buenos Aires as at Montevideo, we saw every part of his domain, from the business quarter to the luxurious suburban villas, the well-planted public squares, and large parks that are growing rapidly, to say nothing of a handsome promenade along the sea front and the unpleasant smell of saladeros that hung about some of the environs.

A short halt at the Prefect's private house gave us an opportunity of judging of the comfort and luxury of the big Montevidean dwellings.

As for the city itself, there is little to remark beyond the curious contrast offered by the tall, handsome modern buildings and the singular little "colonial houses" so popular in Montevideo, which look as if some sprite had cut them off short at the first story for the fun of whisking the rest out of sight. As the town of Montevideo can boast of being, and must obviously preserve the aspect, of a capital city, these overornamented "half houses" and the clumps of green trees scattered everywhere lend it a youthful charm which I hope it will not soon lose.

As a matter of fact, these houses are really charming in the eyes, at least, of those who do not walk about with their heads too high in the air—a pose that is not to be recommended to any. They not only possess a very agreeable façade, taken altogether, but their patios are so designed as to be admirably adapted to the special needs of the climate, and if I were going to live in Montevideo it is certainly in one of those little houses that I should settle.

They have another virtue also, which exemplifies a truth, namely, the necessity at first of a hastily put-up shelter before the more permanent and deeply rooted buildings of the future can be begun. If the Town Council insists on the construction of houses of several stories in some of the avenues the measure may have its justification in the interest of both the aesthetic and the useful. But before they trouble about the effect their streets may produce before the photographer's camera, the Montevideans will, I hope, allow themselves the pleasure of insuring their comfort.

Let the town spread freely since there is plenty of space available. Is it not the curse of all our large European cities to be cramped and confined? New York, between two arms of the sea, has been obliged to invent its hideous "skyscrapers." If we would get all the air and all the light that are necessary to health, every encouragement must be given to families to spread and not crowd together.

The population of Montevideo must be nearly a million now. Of these 100,000 are foreigners. It has many a fine beach on its coastline. A rich vegetation exists in all parts.

Let no childish vanity induce it to attempt too soon to vie with Europe. Its friends can wish it nothing better.

I have said nothing of the public buildings because they are everywhere the same, unless, perhaps, in those European countries where the masses have taken possession of the palaces of their former masters. To me they were less interesting than their inmates, that is, the members of the Government.

Of the three Presidents who did me the honor to receive me in the course of my journey, each has now in the normal course of events yielded his place to a successor. Señor Williman who left the Presidential chair on March 1 had the keenest possible sense of his responsibility to his country. He was the son of an Americanized Alsatian, and seems to have imported into his exercise of authority that valuable quality of well reasoned idealism which has made his race one of the most precious constituent parts of the French Nation.

It must not be forgotten that an American President is first and foremost a man of action, exactly the reverse of the Chief of the State in our European democracies, and a turbulent opposition, ever ready to rush to extremes, makes the task of Government every day more difficult.

Señor Williman gave me the impression of being somewhat reserved, but the genuinely democratic simplicity of his welcome, and the slow gravity of his speech betokened a man whose convictions would be deliberate but profound.

We touched on the political questions now engrossing Europe, and I found he had long been familiar with all the problems that are keeping us so busy.

It is not easy for me to give a personal opinion about the parliamentary world. The Senate organized a friendly reception in my honor at which we exchanged cordial toasts.

But what can a Frenchman do, when he knows not a word of Spanish, unless his Spanish hosts can speak French? There were only two or three members of the Senate or Chamber with whom I could talk. Smiles and gestures of goodwill as we clinked our glasses of champagne were all that was left to us. The eyes asked questions that could be but imperfectly answered.

Among graver personalities were many young men eager for the new reforms. One of the "youngsters"—in this fortunate land even the Senators are scarcely out of their teens—observed to me with gently emphasized irony that Uruguay had traveled further along the road marked out by the French Revolution than our own present republic.

"The penalty of death has been abolished in Uruguay. It has been retained by the Argentine and * * *"

"* * * And in France, I acknowledge. We are, moreover, confronted with a strong retrogressive movement in favor of the right of society to take life."

"We have divorce by mutual consent. The Argentine has nothing even approaching it. The question of divorce has been raised there. The influence of the clergy prevented all discussion. As for the French Republic, * * *"

"I confess we are still stationary on the divorce question by the will of one."

"And then our code grants the same rights to the illegitimate child when recognized as to those born in wedlock—this is common equity."

"I do not deny it. But the prejudice that exists in the public mind with us on this subject appears to me so deeply rooted that, without venturing to make risky predictions, I think we shall not arrive at the solution of the problem that your democracy has accepted without encountering the keenest resistance."

None will be surprised to hear that conversation drifted quickly toward the Uruguay revolutions. Here the thread of our talk was picked up by a young journalist, a deputy, who has spent a long time in Paris and is generally considered to be a coming man.

In witty and picturesque language he explained that Uruguay's revolutions had no more importance than a fit of hysterics. One is Red; another is White. A tie or a bit of stuff sewn on the hat serves as a badge. (The Reds are the advanced party, the Whites the conservative. It was from the Reds that Garibaldi borrowed the famous red shirt that he brought back from Montevideo.) The cradle supplies the bit of stuff; in a moment of popular excitement it is adopted and becomes at once a point of honor.

Then some little thing happens which for one reason or another leads to a heated discussion, and immediately there follows a general conflagration. The only fixed idea left in you is that you are a Red, and that the Whites must be exterminated, or vice versa, according to the camp in which you may be enrolled. There is nothing for it then but to let the effervescence work itself off.

But when I remarked that the life of a man counted for nothing when Uruguayan effervescence was working itself off, the ready assent they gave me showed that on this point no discussion was possible.

"But I understood you had abolished the death sentence."

"It is legally abolished, but illegally—"

"Just so. Modern laws, but ancient, very ancient practice."

As may have been noticed, there is a general tendency toward comparisons—I ought perhaps rather to call it jealousy—between the relative progress in the Argentine and Uruguay.

The "Oriental Band" is in Buenos Aires talked of with affectionate good nature, as if it were the spoiled child of the family. You cannot praise Uruguay without winning universal approval accompanied by a smiling reserve that seems to say: "The Orientals are worthy to be Argentinos."

At Montevideo you are more likely to be asked frankly which country you consider foremost. And if you reply that you are quite incompetent to judge, be sure that your answer will be interpreted according to the inclination of the party interested. This often happened to me, annoyingly enough. Every nation offers strong and weak points with which we must reckon according to the form they take and the times in which we are moving. I certainly did not go to the Americans for a classification of the different States of Europe. Why should I have been expected to draw up a scale of civilization for them?

The Argentine, Uruguay, and Brazil are, each in its way, grand social structures having their weak places, like the countries of Europe. I am telling what I saw, leaving to all the liberty of replying that I was mistaken in what I saw. That is sufficient. But one of the best ways of moving ahead of one's fellows is to acquire the capacity for self-judgment and self-reformation.

Among so many kindly hosts, I may pick out the youthful Minister of Foreign Affairs, Señor Emilio Barbatoux, whose polished Parisianism made him the mark for all the questions dictated by my ignorance. With unwearying courtesy the statesman who is perfectly conversant with the French point of view succeeded in adapting himself to my particular line of vision, and greatly facilitated the too superficial examination I was making by the clearness of his information.

I was invited to a very French dinner at the Uruguay Club, where I found the greatest comfort combined with Franco-American luxury, and I was able to study at my ease the pure Latinity of the Uruguayan politician. If I had foreseen these "Travel Notes" I should have jotted down on paper some of the speeches to which I listened on my travels, when French culture was eulogized in the highest terms by the natives of these countries whose future is of such interest to us. It was not till I had left it all behind me that I became conscious of the omission.

I can only say that in the Uruguay Club and again in Mme. Sillard's charming home I found France again, as also in the salons of the French Minister at Montevideo.

There was something of France, too, in the editorial offices of the newspapers, La Razon and of El Dia, for of course an old journalist could not resist the temptation of calling at a newspaper office. Only, having gone there intending to interview the editor in my own way, the tables were turned on me and a volley of questions fired off at me. Next morning there appeared the very interview I had been avoiding, and all my "ahs" and "ohs" were cunningly interpreted to make up a tale.

Consequently, all I can report of Uruguay journalism is that my confrères of Montevideo excel in the art of the Abbé de l'Epée, who managed to make the dumb talk. I trust this remark will be taken as praise.

The few occasions I had for talking with them have left me a very pleasant souvenir. I can truthfully proclaim them all Latins of the purest water. Latins by their vivacity, by the warmth of their temperament, by the trend of their minds toward general truths, by every sign of their predilection for wrestling with ideas. In this respect it was impossible to think them otherwise than youthful and delightful.

The estimable Renan, who was indulgence itself, gently reproached me once with a lack of leniency. Alas! time, the mother of experience, brings to us all, in the end, the faculty of appreciation in the sense in which the philosopher meant it, and he himself never consented to sacrifice one of his early opinions unless he could at least preserve its outward expression.

Still, it is a serious question not only which is the better, but which has wrought the most good in the world—youth, with its presumptuous eagerness, or weary wisdom.

Now, is it possible to deduce any definite ideas of the special features of the people of Uruguay from these faithfully reported but necessarily diffuse notes, culled in chance encounters? If I had not just come from the Argentine I should have plenty of material, but as it is, consider, pray, that I have only to modify some expressions in consideration of the smaller proportions of the subject, and all I might tell you of the aspect of town or country, as also of the mind and character of its inhabitants, would, to all intents and purposes, sound in your ears like a twicetold tale.

Then, you will say, the Argentine and Uruguay are practically one and the same. That I cannot admit. As well might one confuse natives of Marseilles and Brest, who, however, are of the same country.

I prefer not to express an opinion that might stimulate the never-slumbering rivalry that exists between the two Hispano-American peoples of la Plata. But as the common sense of Governments and peoples generally prevails over public excitement, and as the paramount interest of both countries is the same in economic matters as well as in the more or less clearly defined field of American politics, there is, I think, no reason to fear that either can take offense at an opinion inspired by equal respect for both parties.

There is one point that it is only just to repeat: It is that the women of Uruguay are very beautiful. More or less so than the Argentinos? In the Pan-American Congress the ladies of Buenos Aires gave the palm to a celebrated beauty of Montevideo, in an outburst of hospitable chivalry. I would not have the bad taste to say a word either way. The two banks of la Plata appear to me equally propitious for the development of feminine aesthetics, and for the foreigner who loves art the handsomest model is ever that which is before his eyes.

What more shall I say? A country of 1,400,000 inhabitants; a town of 400,000 souls. If Buenos Aires is the second Latin city in the world, Montevideo follows—at some little distance, perhaps—but with a creditable total.

The soil is no less well worked. Cattle-raising is equally successful; the saladeros and large factories like those of the Liebig Company at Fray Bentos provide a market as good as the freezing machines do for Buenos Aires.

The political and social institutions are much alike, both inspired by the same regard for equality as was proclaimed by the French Revolution and permeated by our own doctrines of justice and liberty. And if the Uruguayans have ventured to carry the logical solutions of pure reason further than we have done, the reason is probably that the democratic Governments of these new countries have not had to contend with the same atavistic resistance that must be reckoned with in older lands where men's minds have been molded by long history.

A cheap criticism might here be made by considering only such or such an aspect of these young communities. We lay great stress on their revolutions, and while it is to be hoped that violence will before long be laid aside, I have unreservedly set down all I learned about these movements. Nevertheless we must admit that Uruguay is not without a show of reason when she replies by reproaching us with the floods of blood that we have shed in the course of our civil wars, even down to our most recent history. Let the first stone be thrown by him. * * *

The ardent nationalism of Uruguay has nothing to fear from that of the Argentine. There are advantages and disadvantages in importing too great sensitiveness on the point of honor into every question. As a contribution to the international exhibition in honor of the Argentine centenary, Uruguay published a very handsome volume in which there was set forth, in pictures and figures, the entire history of its national development, the text being given in French and Spanish. The title was, "Uruguay Through One Century."

The evolution of the Oriental republic is therein set forth. Of course, the weak spot of such works is that they gloss over the deficiencies, and thus, though hiding nothing, there is always the risk of discomfiture when they are subjected to bright light.

It remains none the less true that the economic growth of Uruguay is no whit inferior to that of the Argentine in these last few years, and that the future justifies the highest hopes. It is possible that on either side of the estuary the heat of political and social verbiage is not always in accordance with cold reality. This is a criticism that might be made of any land, and I could apply it easily to those I knew best.

When all their defects and excellences are taken into account I should say that the Uruguayans may be distinguished from the Argentinos by their impulsive idealism. Less sober-minded and less attached to novelty of doctrine—these are the two points that struck me first in the Uruguayan's character. For this very reason he is more prone to argue about theories, more expansive about himself and others.

It may be that French is less current at Montevideo than at Buenos Aires, though it seemed to me that, intellectually, French influence, if less profound, is more patent on the surface. The mixture of European races is about the same in the two countries. How is it that the first impression is one of greater Latinity? Latinity of feeling which lends a charm to social relations; Latinity of thought and action with all its advantages of spontaneity, all its defects of method, its alternations of enthusiasm and hesitation in fulfilling its plans.

The Latin conceived and created this modern civilization, which the northerner has appropriated to his own solid and empiric structures, but he has only succeeded in giving them their present universal application by renewed contact with the ideal in which the descendant of the Roman conquest too readily found consolation for his own desultory practice. South American Latinity has allowed itself to be left far behind by the great Anglo-Saxon republic of the north, just as European Latinity has suffered its fiercest attacks from those who were designated as "barbarians" by ancient Rome.

Yet how great would be the darkness if the light of Latinity, as it survives even in its enemies, were suddenly to go out! If a man could always measure the obstacle, he would frequently lack courage for the leap.

It was the force of Latin impetus that sent modern humanity forth to besiege the fortresses of oppression, and it is the task of the experimental method to convert them by patience and perseverance into asylums of liberty; we know that, to accomplish the miracle, it will be necessary for citizens to be made anew by the exercise of self-control and a primitive respect for the liberty of one's neighbors. Considering all the feats that have been accomplished by the Latin races, I see nothing before them but this last and crowning marvel to complete their amazing history.

In Uruguay the first indication of the new order of things will be the suppression of revolution. Before this comes to pass there will be great changes on both sides of the ocean in the reflex action of humanity and, in a less degree, in its reasoning consciousness. Here is an educational work which offers a vast field for future effort.

The Government of Uruguay is well aware that the greatest difficulty in the way of the self-government of a nation is that of correlating the notion of a right and the act by which we all are continually expressing it; it seeks, therefore, to imprint on the minds of the young those broad lines of general principles by which our private and public life must be regulated.

I lacked time to visit the schools, which are the most unmistakable thermometer of any social structure. A glance at the catalogue sent in by the Primary Schools Council to the third Congress of School Hygiene, held in Paris, Aug. 2-7, 1910, will give us some light on the subject.

On the initiative of Señor Claude Williman, the present President, 360 country schools have been opened in Uruguay, so that the total number of primary public schools supported by the State reached, at the end of 1910, 1,000, and gives us a ratio of one public school per 1,095 of the population.

This is not the place in which to describe the admirable organization of obligatory primary teaching in Uruguay and the remarkable development of the primary schools under M. Williman's Presidency. The syllabus for a period of school life, from the sixth to the fourteenth year, is, I think, the most interesting. In all the schools which are ranked as of first, second, or third degree, and in the country schools, the characteristic of the course is the revival of the study of the external features of the earth, still too often sacrificed in our European schools to the subjective teaching of olden days. In the very first year's work I note that the following subjects are included, to be carried further in later years: Geometry, notions of locality, the human body, animals, plants, minerals, weights and color, demonstration lessons, &c.

Of course, it is obvious that the first notions of such matters must, if they are to reach the minds of infants of six years, be of the most rudimentary character. But is not this the right age at which to begin to give a bias to the child's mind?

In successive years, it will be taught to observe, and make simple experiments, so that it is progressively prepared for contact with the world in which it will be called to live, in a way that has little in common with the absorption of general rules, which, until very recently, constituted the bulk of what we call education. The very fact that they have evolved this system of education and that they have put their theories in practice, proves that the Latins of Uruguay are on the right road to succeed in the realization of their hopes.

For if they can time to impart to budding intelligence a solid base of observation and experience, or in other words, to teach it the sensations that different phenomena give to us, and offer such explanations as we can supply, they will surely not be checked by the higher generalizations which are the natural outcome of scientific study, and also its crown.

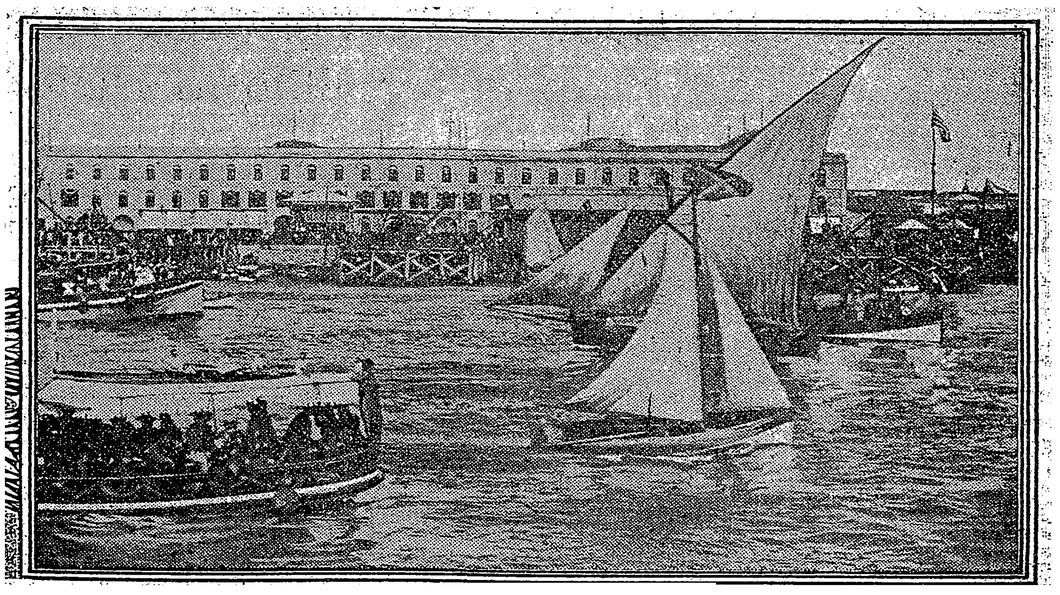
In the catalogue of the school libraries for the use of pupils and professors, I find such French works as these:

Le Bon Psychologie de l'éducation; l'Education de la matière; Le Dantec, les Influences ancestrales; de Phomme à la science; Henri Poincare, la Valeur de la science; la Science et l'Hypothèse.

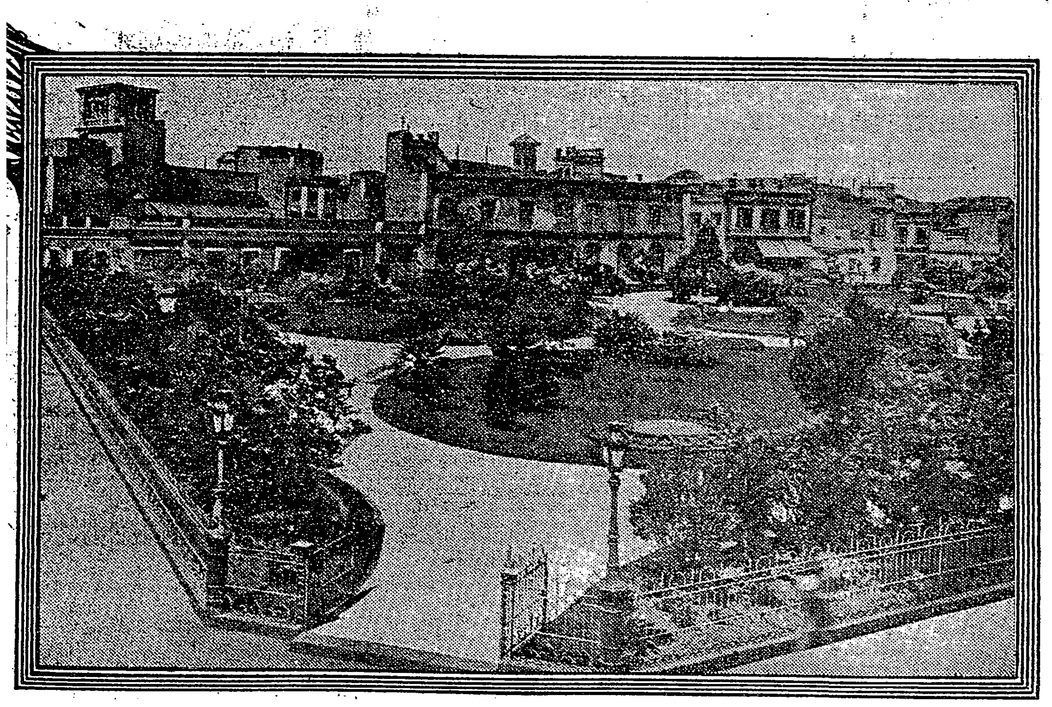
If we are not careful, these "savages" will outstrip the "civilized." I shall make no bold predictions. There is, as I hinted just now, so wide a margin between understanding and the act that should result from it, that the magnificent progress made in words is out of proportion to the slow evolution of action.

It remains for our Uruguay friends, as for their European judges, to surprise the world by a new history of human society.

Whatever this history may hold in store for us, I am glad to think that our Latin republics of South America—and Uruguay amongst the first—will offer the spectacle of a splendid effort of high achievement. I will not seek to hide the great pleasure it gives me to record the fact, because, in the first place, the sight of man laboring to raise himself is always suggestive, and, secondly, because for a critical mind, there is no better complement than the need of hope.



The Custom House, Montevideo.



Zabala Square, Montevideo, Uruguay.

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